

2013 Wyoming Bear Wise Community Project Update

Introduction

The Bear Wise Community Program is a proactive initiative that seeks to minimize human-bear (black and grizzly) conflicts, minimize management-related bear mortalities associated with preventable conflicts, and safeguard human communities in northwest Wyoming. The overall objective of Bear Wise is to promote individual and community ownership of the ever-increasing human-bear conflict issue and eventually, create a social conscience regarding responsible attractant management and behavior in bear habitat. This project seeks to raise awareness and proactively influence local waste management infrastructures with the specific intent of preventing conflicts from recurring. Strategies used to meet the campaign's objectives are: 1) minimize accessibility of unnatural attractants to bears in developed areas; 2) employ a public outreach and education campaign to reduce knowledge gaps about bears and the causes of conflicts; and 3) employ a bear resistant waste management system and promote bear-resistant waste management infrastructure.

This report provides a summary of program accomplishments in 2013. Past accomplishments are reported in the 2006-12 annual reports of the IGBST.

Background

In 2004, a subcommittee of the IGBST conducted an analysis of causes and spatial distribution of grizzly bear mortalities and conflicts in the GYA for the period of 1994–2003. The analysis identified that the majority of known, human-caused grizzly bear mortalities occurred due to agency management actions in response to conflicts (34%), self defense killings, primarily by big game hunters (20%), and vandal killings (11%). The report made 33 recommendations to reduce human-grizzly bear conflicts and mortalities with focus on 3 actions that could be positively influenced by agency resources and personnel: 1) reduce conflicts at developed sites; 2) reduce self-defense killings; and 3) reduce vandal killings (Servheen et al. 2004).

To address action number 1, the committee recommended that a demonstration area be established to focus proactive, innovative, and enhanced management strategies where developed site conflicts and agency management actions resulting in relocation or removal of grizzly bears had historically been high. Spatial examination of conflicts identified the Wapiti area in northwest Wyoming as having one of the highest concentrations of black bear and grizzly bear conflicts in the GYA. The North Fork of the Shoshone River west of Cody was then chosen as the first area composed primarily of private land to have a multi-agency/public approach to reducing conflicts at developed sites.

In 2005, the Department began implementation of the Bear Wise Community Program. Although the program's efforts were focused primarily in the Wapiti area, the Department initiated a smaller scale project in Teton County to address the increasing number of black and grizzly bear conflicts in the Jackson area. For the last 7 years, the Bear Wise Community Programs in both Cody and Jackson have deployed a multi-faceted education and outreach campaign in an effort to minimize human-bear conflicts and promote proper attractant management. Although a wide

array of challenges remain and vary between communities, many accomplishments have been made and progress is expected to continue as Bear Wise efforts gain momentum.

Wapiti Project Update

The Wapiti Bear Wise Community Program continues to utilize radio, television and print media, mass mailings, and the use of signing on private and public land to convey the educational messages surrounding human-bear conflict prevention. Conflict prevention information is also disseminated through public workshops and presentations and by contact with local community groups, governments, the public school system, and various youth organizations. To compliment educational initiatives, the program uses an extensive outreach campaign that assists the community in obtaining and utilizing bear-resistant products and implementing other practical methods of attractant management. Ongoing efforts and new accomplishments for 2013 are as follows:

1. The Carcass Management Program continues to provide a domestic livestock carcass removal service for livestock producers located in occupied grizzly bear habitat within Park County, Wyoming. The program has been traditionally funded by the Park County Predator Management District and Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board. In addition to those donors, the program received contributions from Park County, Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife, and TE Ranch. The program provides livestock producers and owners with an alternative to the use of on-site carcass dumps, which are a significant bear attractant and indirectly contribute to numerous human-bear conflicts. Since June 2008, 553 domestic livestock carcasses have been removed from private lands.
2. Recommendations concerning the proper storage of garbage and other attractants are provided to the Park County Planning and Zoning Commission for new developments within the greater Cody area. The Coordinator reviews proposed developments on a case-by-case basis, attends monthly meeting and contacts applicants directly to discuss conflict prevention measures. To date, these comments have been adopted as either formal recommendations or as a condition of approval for 18 new developments within Park County.
3. A traveling Bear Aware educational display was developed and produced for use in public libraries across northwest Wyoming. The display focuses on the prevention of human-bear conflicts and features graphics, an interactive touch screen monitor, short video segments, a grizzly bear hide and skull, and educational materials that are available for check out. The display was featured at the Lander Library April through June.
4. The Wyoming Game and Fish partnership with the North Fork Bear Wise Group (NFBWG) continues to grow. The group is comprised of six local Wapiti citizens that meet monthly in order to articulate community needs and assist in the development of educational and outreach initiatives.

5. A “Bear Aware” billboard, “Bear Use Area” highway signs, and educational kiosks remain posted throughout Wapiti and the Crandall/Sunlight area north of Cody. Kiosk message boards are updated three times during the non-denning season with seasonally appropriate conflict prevention information.
6. Department employees built two permanent electric fences for residents west of Cody. One electric fence was put around an apple orchard and the other around a garden; both had historically attracted bears to close proximity to housing.



7. Bear Aware information was given to Cody Lodging Company to be distributed to temporary summer rental properties. These properties are scattered throughout grizzly bear habitat and often house travelers for a week at a time.
8. Educational black bear/grizzly bear identification materials were distributed to individuals and to local sporting goods stores in the Cody, Pinedale, and Lander areas and mailed to black bear hunters who registered bait sites with the Department in areas surrounding the GYA.
9. Numerous informational presentations were given that focused on human-bear

conflict prevention to audiences including the Park and Big Horn County public school systems, homeowners associations, Boy Scouts, 4-H members, DANO, Paint Rock Hunter Management Program, guest ranches, and college students. Frequent 1-on-1 contacts were made during the 2013 conflict season in areas where the occurrence of human-bear conflicts has historically been high.

10. A “Working Safely in Bear Country” workshop was conducted for the Park County Weed and Pest District, Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming River Trips, West Yellowstone Smoke Jumpers, Cody Search and Rescue, and Marathon Oil and Gas.
11. A booth containing information on bear identification, attractant storage, hunting and recreating safely in bear country, and the proper use of bear spray was staffed at the Powell Valley Health Fair, Cody Arbor Day, Park County Employee Health Fair, Spring into Yellowstone, and Sportsmen for Fish and Wildlife Banquet.
12. A public service announcement (PSA) was recorded by the Yellowstone Country Bear Hunters Association (YCBHA) on “Black Bear/Grizzly Bear ID” and broadcast over the radio in the spring and fall of 2013. The WGFD, YCBHA, NFBWG split the cost of the PSA’s. The NFBWG also purchased a spot for a bear spray advertisement in the Cody Enterprise Hunting Edition.
13. Department employees reviewed human-bear safety material for Wyoming Hunter Safety Course, IGBC pamphlets, IGBC bear spray video, and New Mexico Game and Fish/Wildlife Management supplemental/distributive feeding of bears.

Pinedale Area Update

In 2011, a Bear Wise Community effort was initiated targeting residential areas north of Pinedale, Wyoming where the occurrence of human-bear conflict has increased in recent years. Accomplishments for the Pinedale area in 2013 are as follows:

1. The Department hosted “Living in Lion, Bear, and Wolf Country” workshops in Pinedale and Farson. About 50 people attended the workshops.
2. Hunting in Bear Country presentations were given to 3 hunter safety classes in the Region.
3. A bear safety presentation was given to cowboys and sheepherders of two different grazing associations in the Region.
4. A bear safety presentation was given to two natural gas production companies in the Region.

5. A bear safety presentation was given to staff members of the Sublette County Chamber of Commerce and Sublette County Visitor's Center.
6. A bear safety presentation was given to the Pinedale and Big Piney Ranger Districts of the United States Forest Service.
7. A bear safety presentation was given to Sublette County's Tip Top Search and Rescue group.
8. A bear safety presentation was given to Sublette County Weed and pest workers and volunteers.
9. A bear safety presentation was given to staff members of the Red Cliff Bible Camp and New Fork Lake Boy Scout Camp.
10. A bear safety presentation was given to approximately 30 Pinedale District Bureau of Land Management employees.
11. The Department hosted a bear safety booth at Pinedale's Rendezvous Days Celebration, contacting hundreds of participants over a three day period. Pinedale's Rendezvous Days attracts approximately 10,000 people over the 4 day event and Department employees contact an estimated 1,000 constituents.
12. The Department hosted a bear safety booth at the Cora Rural Fire Department's annual picnic and celebration, contacting dozens of homeowners that live and recreate in occupied grizzly bear habitat.

Objectives for 2014 include continued expansion of the program into the other areas of the state where human-bear conflicts continue to be a chronic issue and the continuation of current educational and outreach efforts in the Cody area with specific focus on areas that have not adopted proper attractant management methods.

The Wapiti and Pinedale area Bear Wise Community programs face the ongoing challenges of: 1) the absence of ordinances, regulations, or laws prohibiting the feeding of bears; 2) limited educational opportunities and contact with portions of the community due to a large number of summer-only residents and the lack of organized community groups and; 3) decreased public tolerance for grizzly bears due to record numbers of human-bear conflicts and continued federal legal protection. The future success of the Bear Wise program lies in continued community interest and individual participation in proper attractant management.

Jackson Hole Project Update

The Bear Wise Jackson Hole program continues educational and outreach initiatives in an effort to minimize human-bear conflicts within the community of Jackson and surrounding areas. In 2013, the program's public outreach and educational efforts included the use of signage, public workshops and presentations, distribution of informational pamphlets, promoting awareness about bear spray, and utilizing our bear education trailer.

1. A bear education trailer was purchased in August 2010 with funding contributions from the Department, Grand Teton National Park, Bridger Teton National Forest and Jackson Hole Wildlife Foundation. Two bear mounts (1 grizzly bear and 1 black bear) have been placed in the trailer along with other educational materials. The bear mounts were donated to the Department through a partnership with the United States Taxidermist Association and the Center for Wildlife Information. The trailer was displayed and staffed at various events and locations including Teton National Park, Jackson Elk Fest and National Elk Refuge Visitor Center.
2. Public service announcements were broadcast on 4 local radio stations in Jackson for a total of 8 weeks throughout the spring, summer, and fall of 2013. The announcements focused on storing attractants so they are unavailable to bears and hunting safely in bear country.
3. Numerous educational talks were presented to various groups including homeowner's associations, guest ranches, youth camps, Jackson residents, tourists, and school groups.
4. Spanish language bear informational pamphlets were distributed to Spanish speaking residents in Teton County with the help of the Teton County Latino Resource Center, Teton Literacy Center, and the Jackson Visitor Center.
5. Bear educational posters were placed for a fifth year inside of Jackson's public buses.
6. Restroom posters with information about attractant storage were placed in 16 different restaurants in Teton County for a 6-month period.
7. Refrigerator magnets featuring tips about proper attractant management were distributed to Teton Village homeowners and Jackson Hole Mountain Resort lodging.
8. Numerous personal contacts were made with private residents in Teton County. This has proven to be a useful way to establish working relationships with residents and maintain an exchange of information about bear activity in the area.
9. A booth containing information on bear identification, attractant storage, hunting and recreating safely in bear country, and the proper use of bear spray was staffed at the Jackson Hole Antler Auction.
10. Assisted 6 hunting outfitters with the installation and maintenance of electric fence systems around their field camps located in the Bridger-Teton National Forest. A private

donation of \$500 was used to purchase additional electric fence equipment for this popular program.

11. Signage detailing information on hunting safely in bear country, bear identification, recent bear activity, and proper attractant storage were placed at USFS trailheads and in private residential areas throughout Teton County.

12. Consultations were conducted at multiple businesses and residences where recommendations were made regarding sanitation infrastructure and compliance with the Bear Conflict Mitigation and Prevention LDR.

13. Bear Aware educational materials were distributed to campground hosts in the Caribou-Targhee National Forest, hunters, and numerous residents in Teton County.

14. Several radio and newspaper interviews were conducted regarding conflict prevention in the Jackson area.

15. Educational black bear/grizzly bear identification materials were distributed to black bear hunters who registered bait sites with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department in the Jackson region.

Objectives for the Bear Wise Jackson Hole program in 2014 will again be focused on supporting Teton County and local waste management companies with projects that will help disseminate information and achieve compliance with the recently adopted Teton County Bear Conflict Mitigation and Prevention LDR. In addition, more work will be done to identify areas within the city limits of Jackson and Star Valley communities where better attractant management and sanitation infrastructure is needed.

The recent implementation of the Teton County Bear Conflict Mitigation and Prevention LDR has greatly reduced the amount of available attractants on the landscape and is a tremendous step forward for the Bear Wise Jackson Hole program. The new challenges faced by the Department will be achieving full compliance with this regulation, even in years with low conflict when it may appear that the conflict issue is resolved. The Bear Wise Jackson Hole Program will convey the importance of compliance and strive to maintain public support for the LDR through public outreach and education projects. In order for the Jackson program to be successful, the program must continually identify information and education needs within the community while being adaptive to changing situations across different geographic areas. This will require the Department to coordinate with other government agencies and local non-government organizations working across multiple jurisdictions to develop a uniform and consistent message. If this level of coordination is achieved, the Department will be more effective in gaining support and building enthusiasm for Bear Wise Jackson Hole, directing resources to priority areas, and reaching all demographics.

References

Servheen C., M. Haroldson, K. Gunther, K. Barber, M. Bruscino, M. Cherry, B. Debolt, K. Frey,

L. Hanauksa-Brown, G. Losinski, C. Schwartz, and B. Summerfield. 2004. Yellowstone mortality and conflict reduction report: presented to the Yellowstone Ecosystem Subcommittee (YES) April 7, 2004

Information and Education

2013 Accomplishments

1) Electronic and Print Media

- a) As per Wyoming Statute, grizzly bear relocation from one county to another must be announced through local media and to the local sheriff of the county into which the bear was relocated. Each announcement is posted in a timely fashion to the web page. In 2013, 10 notifications were distributed and posted on the website.
- b) Personnel issued multiple educational news releases throughout the season informing readers and listeners of bear safety, behavior, conflict avoidance, food storage and natural food availability.

2) Grizzly Bear Management Web Page

- a) The grizzly bear management web page continues to be maintained and updated on a regular basis in order to provide timely information to the public regarding grizzly bear management activities conducted by the department. The web page contents include various interagency annual reports and updates and links to other grizzly bear recovery web sites.
- b) Beginning March 2013, weekly updates of ongoing management activities related to depredations, research, trapping and monitoring, and information and education were posted to the department's website. A total of 34 weekly updates were posted for the weeks of March 23, 2013 through November 8, 2013.

3) Conservation Education

- a) In 2013, nine "Staying Safe in Bear, Lion and Wolf Country" seminars were conducted in an effort to increase understanding and knowledge of bears, bear behavior and conflict avoidance. Statewide, 396 attendees participated in the seminars.

4) Hunter Education

- a) Every hunter education class in Wyoming is required to discuss how to hunt safely in bear country. To assist instructors, most have been provided inert bear spray canisters for demonstration purposes and DVD's entitled Staying Safe in Bear Country, A Behavioral Based Approach to Reducing Risk. A section on bear safety is included in the student manual. In 2013, 5670 students were certified.

- b) On an annually basis, newly certified hunter education instructors are trained by department personal in techniques used to prevent encounters while hunting in bear country and the proper use of bear spray. Inert bear spray canisters are used to demonstrate the proper use of bear spray at our New Instructor Hunter Education Academy and are distributed directly to our volunteer instructors at annual Hunter Education Instructor Workshops held around the state.

Publications

The primary link to other publications, annual reports, and peer reviewed literature for the Yellowstone population of grizzly bears is summarized on the United States Geological Service web site at <http://www.nrmssc.usgs.gov/products/IGBST>.